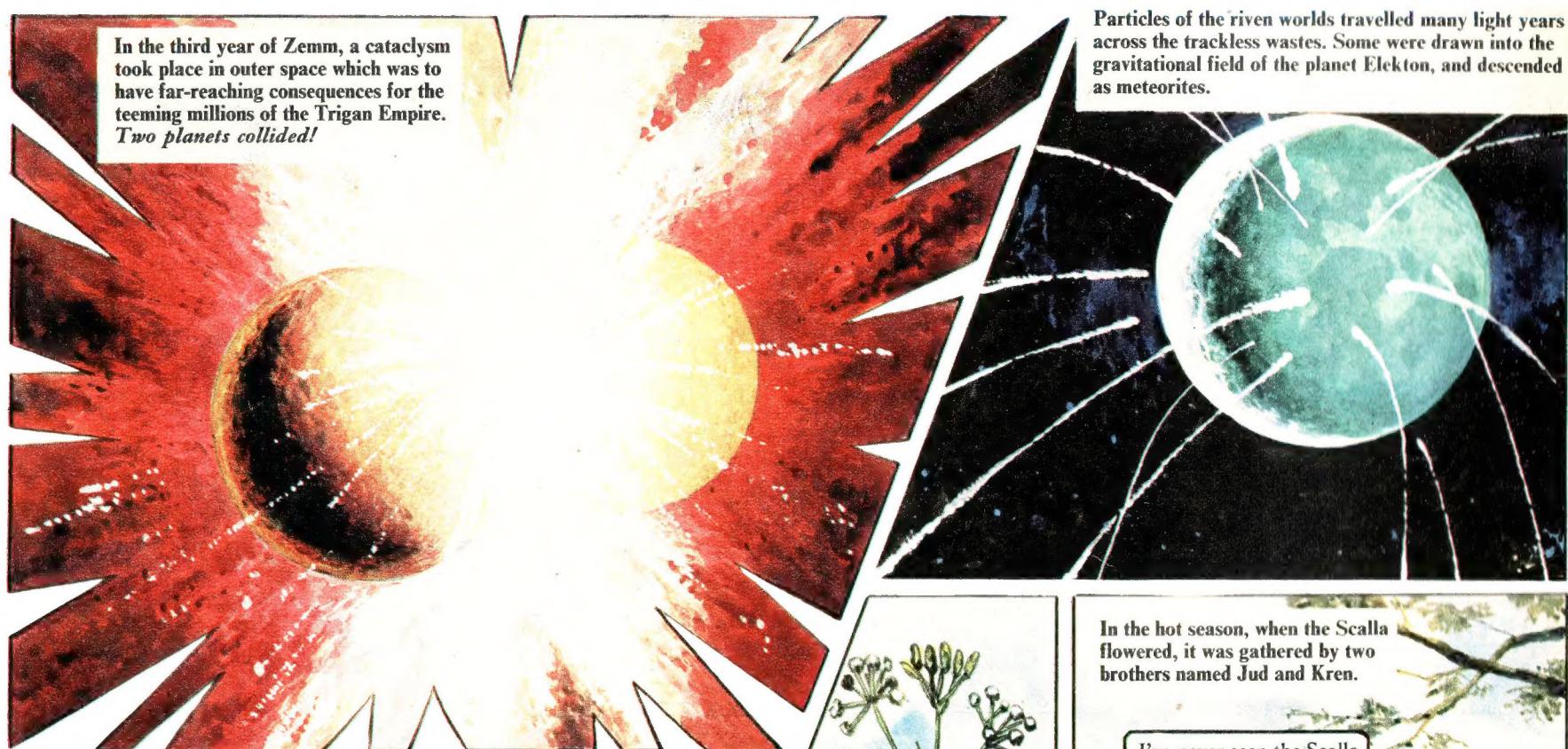


The country of Hericon has become part of the mighty Trigan Empire and is ruled over by the Emperor's son Nikko.

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

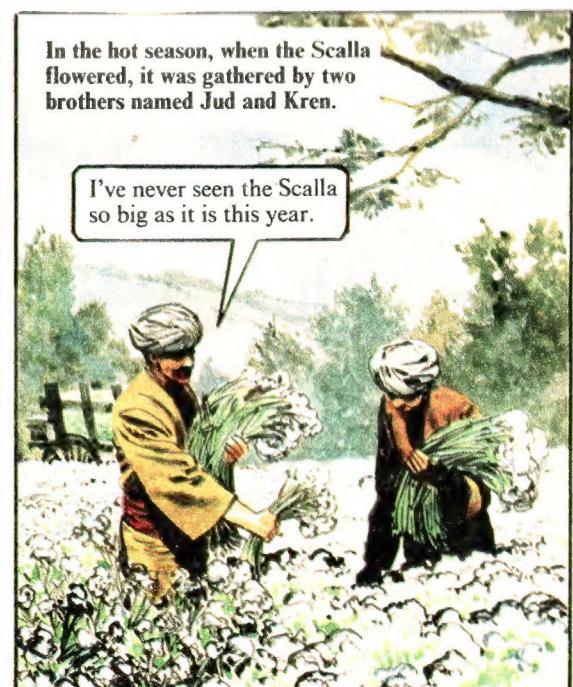
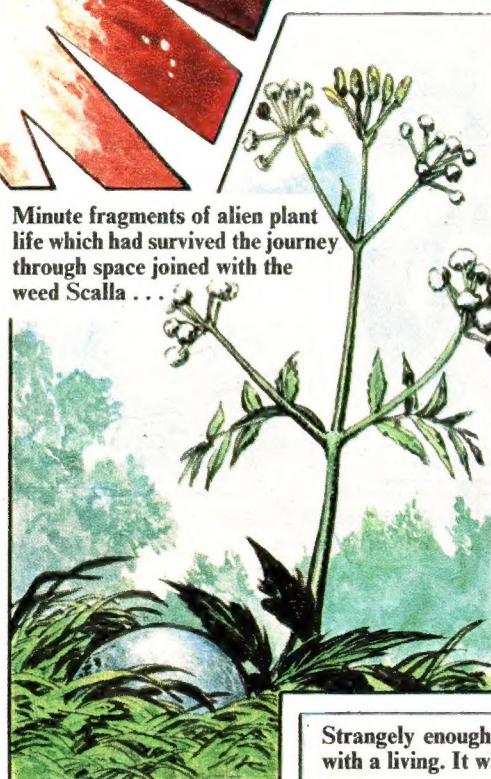
In the third year of Zemm, a cataclysm took place in outer space which was to have far-reaching consequences for the teeming millions of the Trigan Empire. Two planets collided!

Particles of the riven worlds travelled many light years across the trackless wastes. Some were drawn into the gravitational field of the planet Elekton, and descended as meteorites.



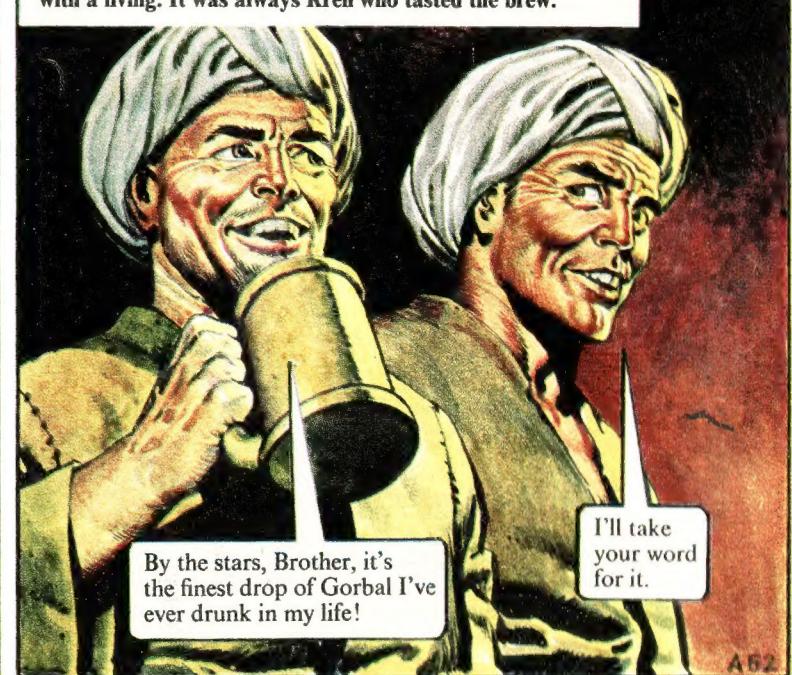
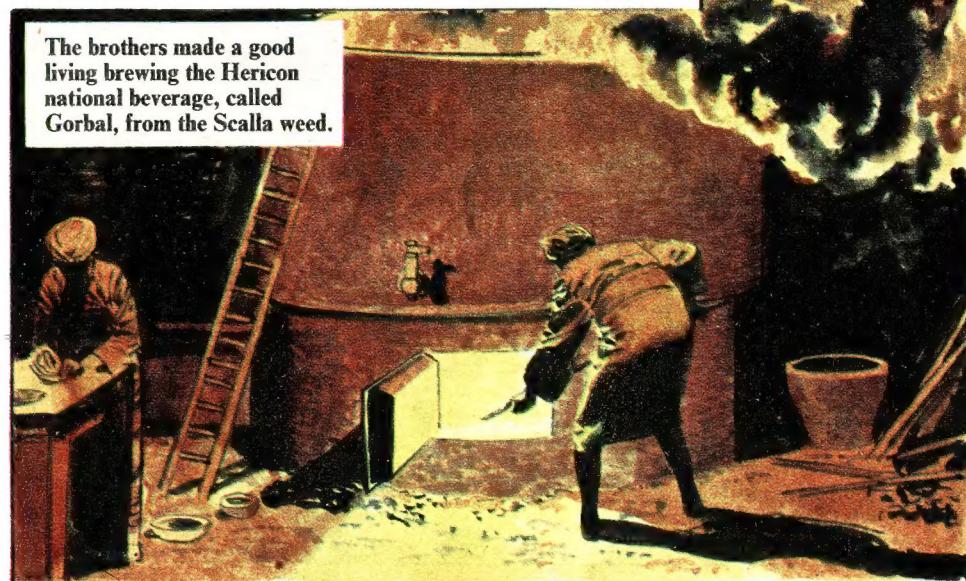
One huge fragment fell in a field in Hericon, close to a patch of common weed which the people of that country called *Scalla* . . .

Minute fragments of alien plant life which had survived the journey through space joined with the weed *Scalla* . . .

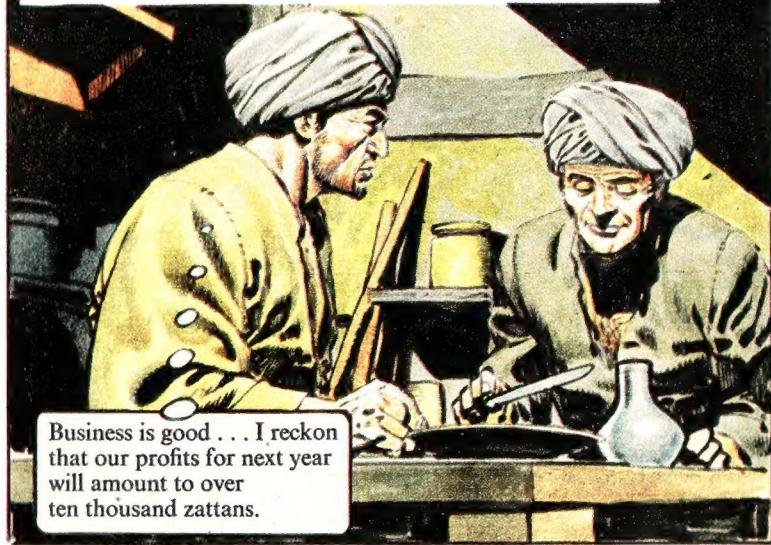


Strangely enough, Jud detested the drink that provided him with a living. It was always Kren who tasted the brew.

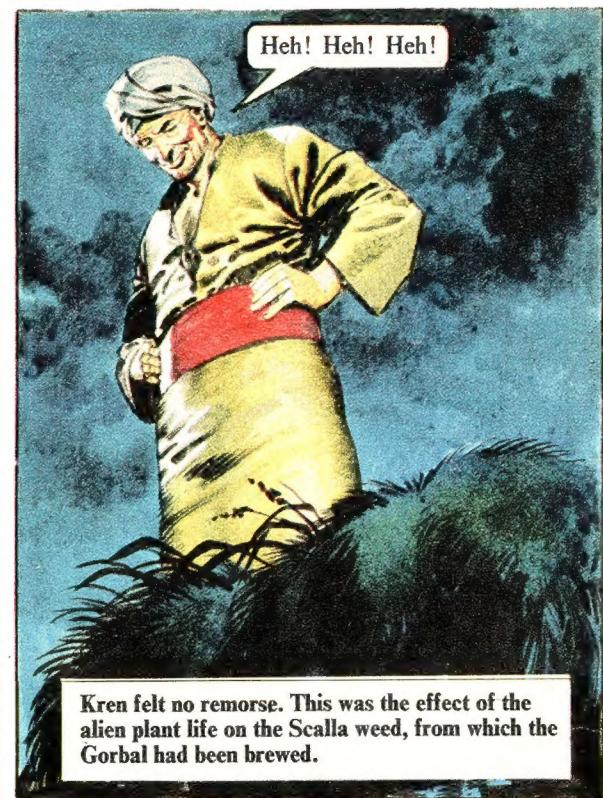
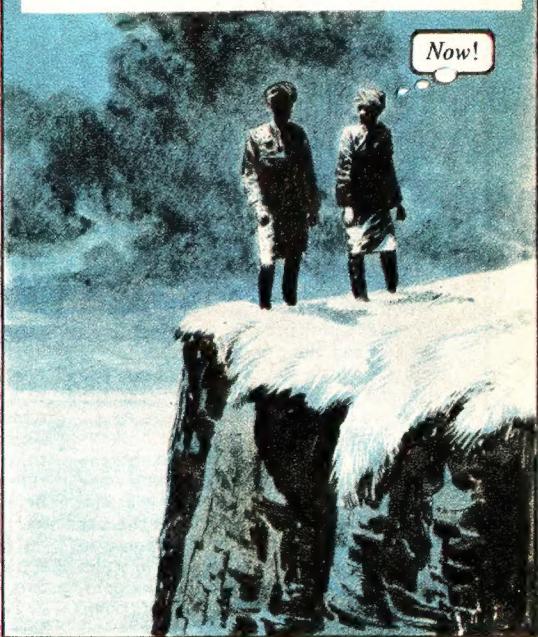
The brothers made a good living brewing the Hericon national beverage, called *Gorbal*, from the *Scalla* weed.



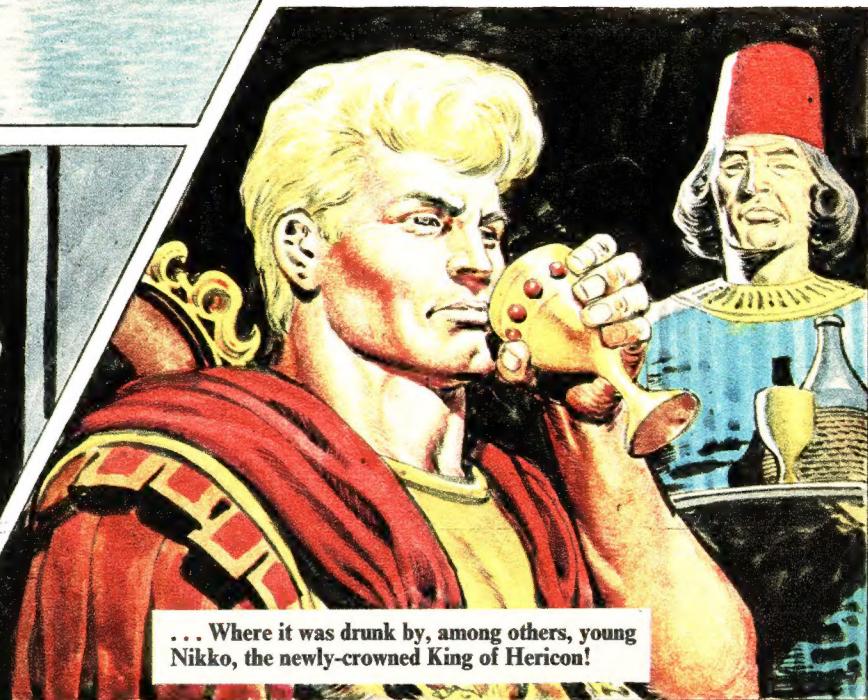
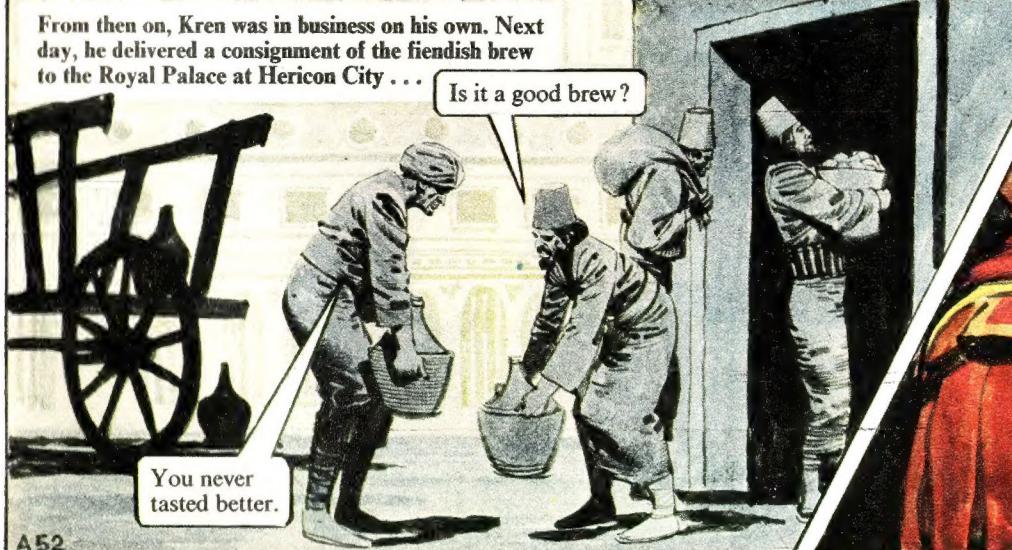
Within a short space of time of drinking that particular brew, a strange change took place in Kren's mind. Normally a simple, kindly man, his brain became ice-cold and calculating . . .



That evening, as was their custom, Jud and Kren went for a walk along the cliff top and . . .

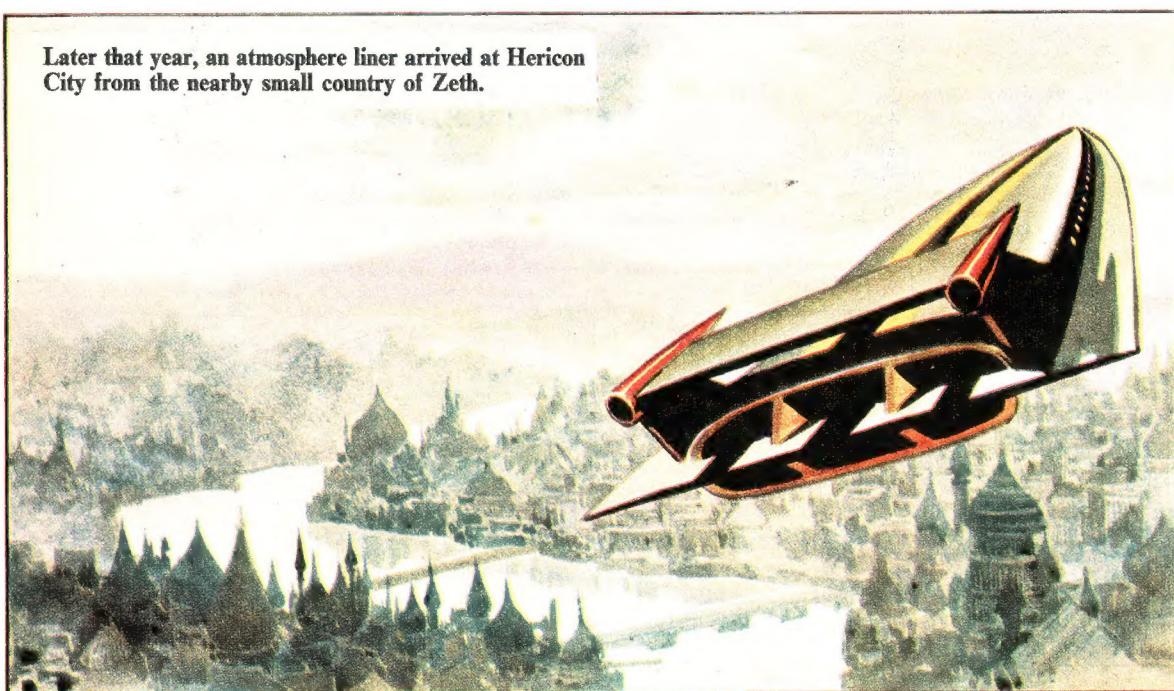


From then on, Kren was in business on his own. Next day, he delivered a consignment of the fiendish brew to the Royal Palace at Hericon City . . .



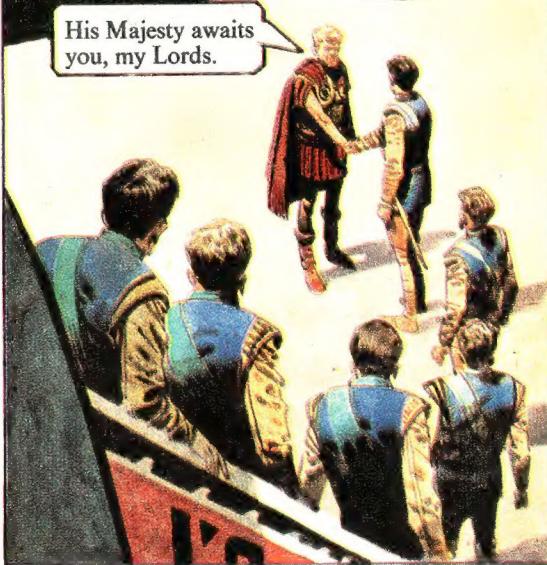
THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

Later that year, an atmosphere liner arrived at Hericon City from the nearby small country of Zeth.



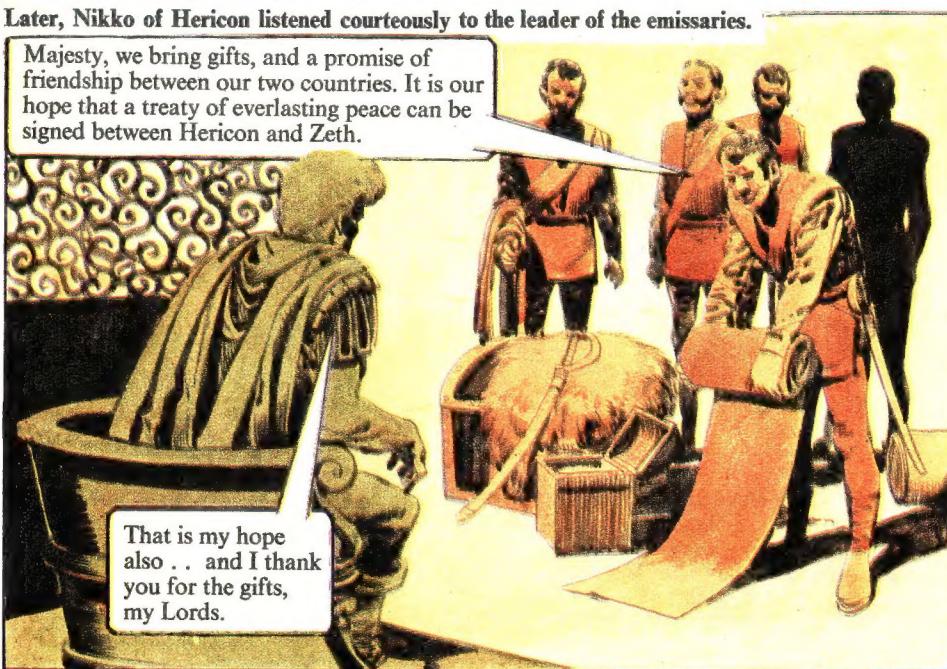
Following a cataclysm in Outer Space, particles of alien plant life have descended on Hericon and affected the weed Scalla, from which is brewed the drink called Gorbal. The effect of drinking the poisoned Gorbal is to turn men into cold, calculating instruments, entirely without mercy . . .

As King Nikko's aide, Janno greeted the group of Zeth emissaries.



Later, Nikko of Hericon listened courteously to the leader of the emissaries.

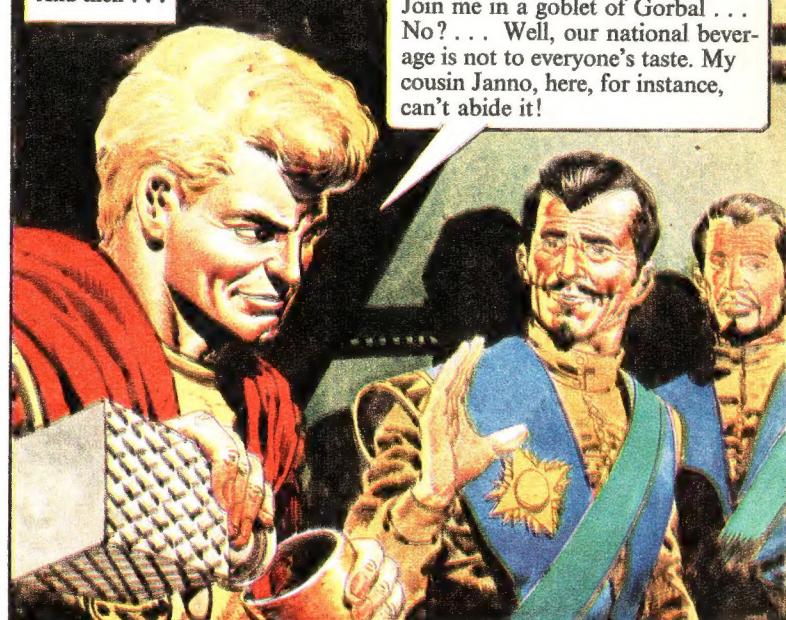
Majesty, we bring gifts, and a promise of friendship between our two countries. It is our hope that a treaty of everlasting peace can be signed between Hericon and Zeth.



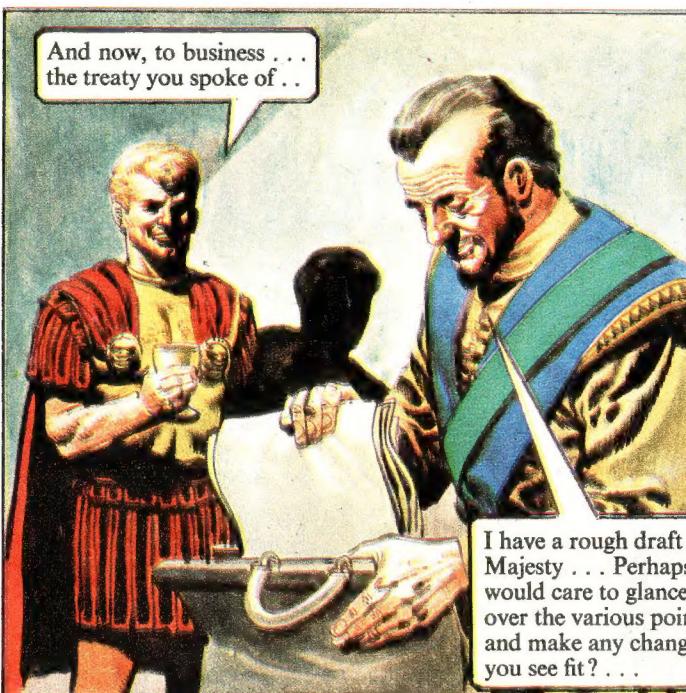
That is my hope also . . . and I thank you for the gifts, my Lords.

And then . . .

Join me in a goblet of Gorbal . . . No? . . . Well, our national beverage is not to everyone's taste. My cousin Janno, here, for instance, can't abide it!



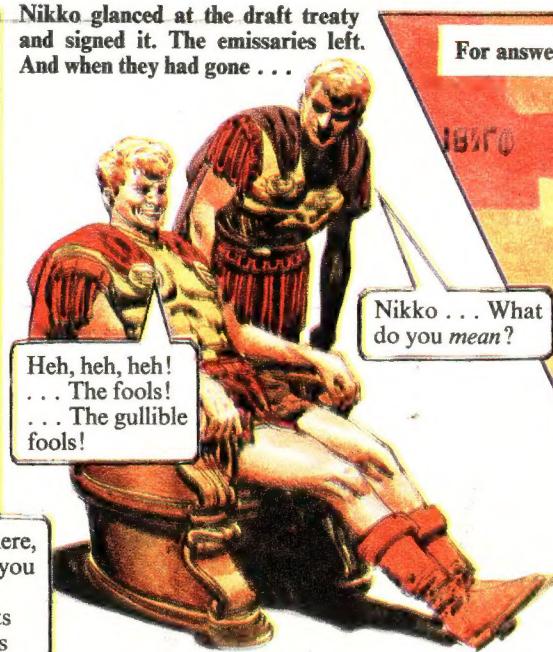
And now, to business . . . the treaty you spoke of . . .



I have a rough draft here, Majesty . . . Perhaps you would care to glance over the various points and make any changes you see fit? . . .

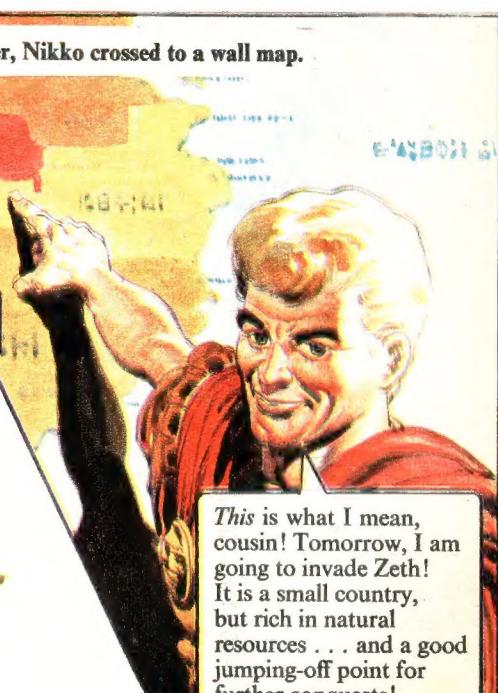
Nikko glanced at the draft treaty and signed it. The emissaries left. And when they had gone . . .

Heh, heh, heh!
. . . The fools!
. . . The gullible
fools!

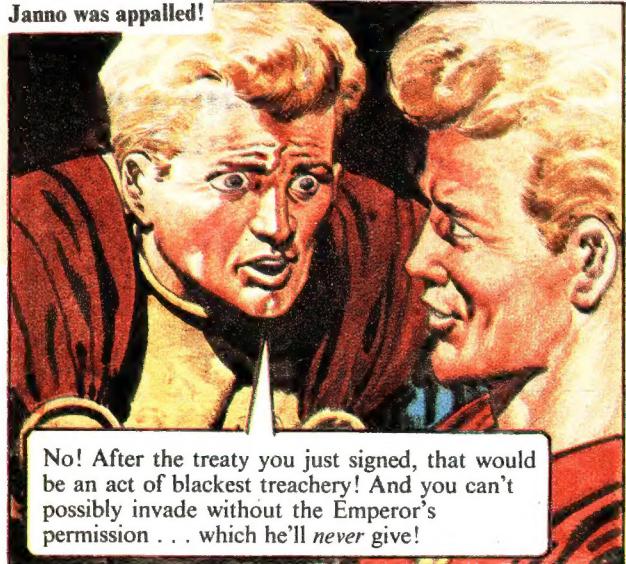


For answer, Nikko crossed to a wall map.

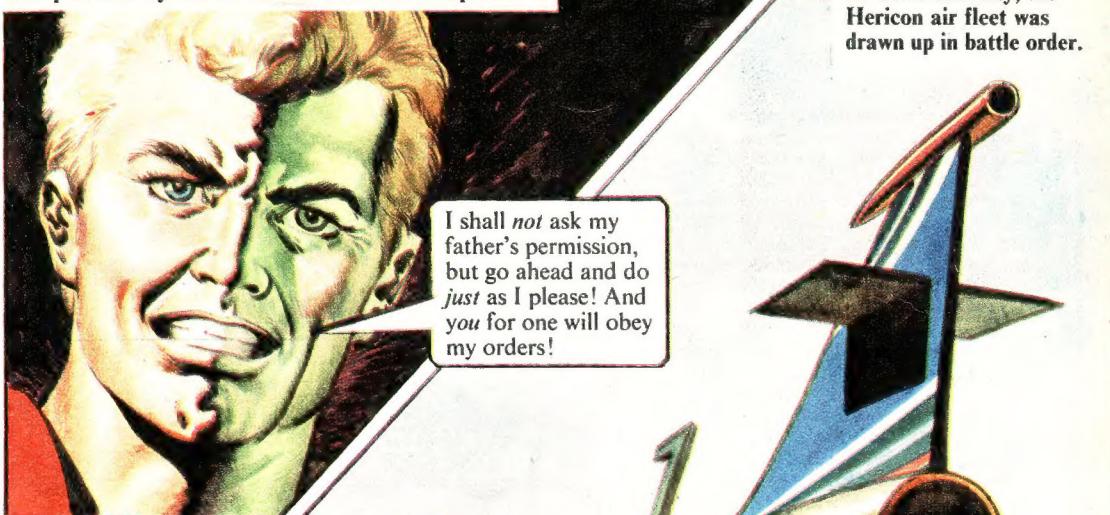
This is what I mean, cousin! Tomorrow, I am going to invade Zeth! It is a small country, but rich in natural resources . . . and a good jumping-off point for further conquests!



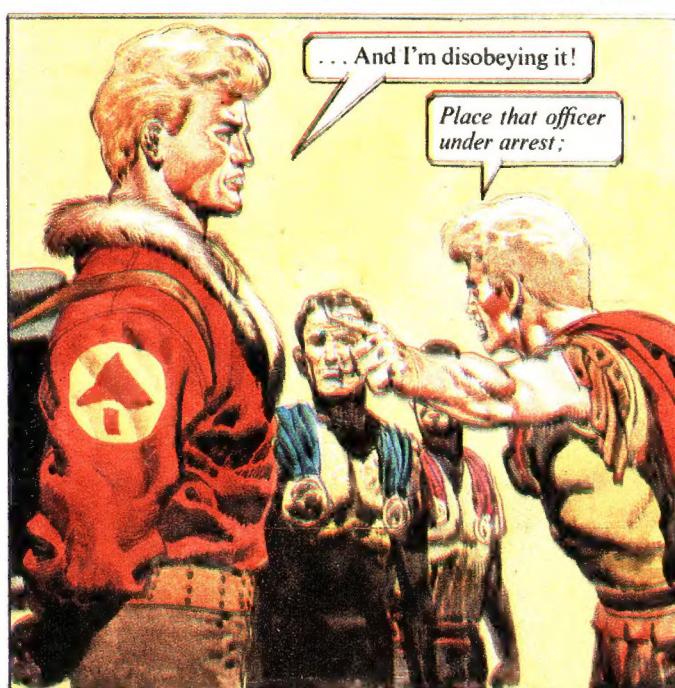
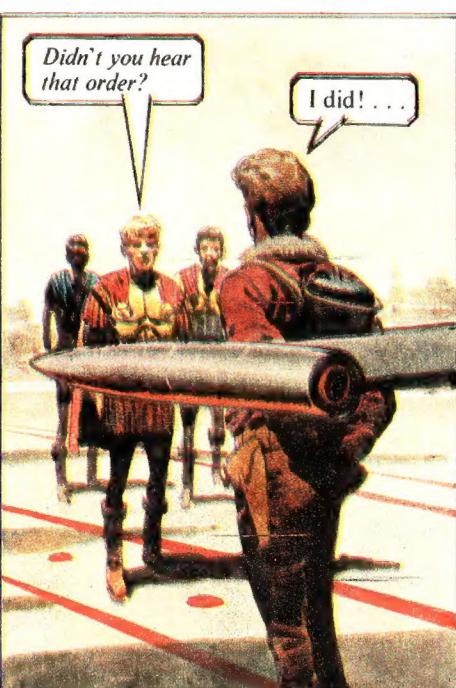
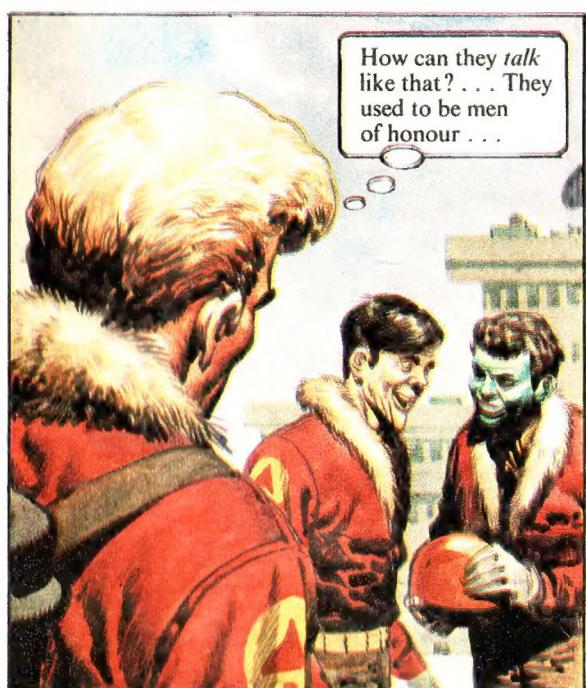
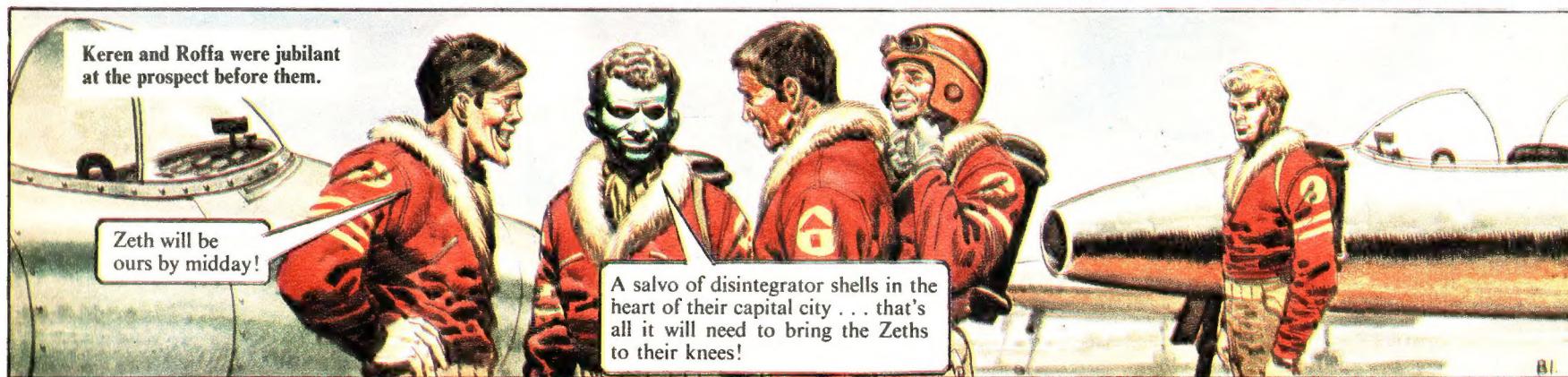
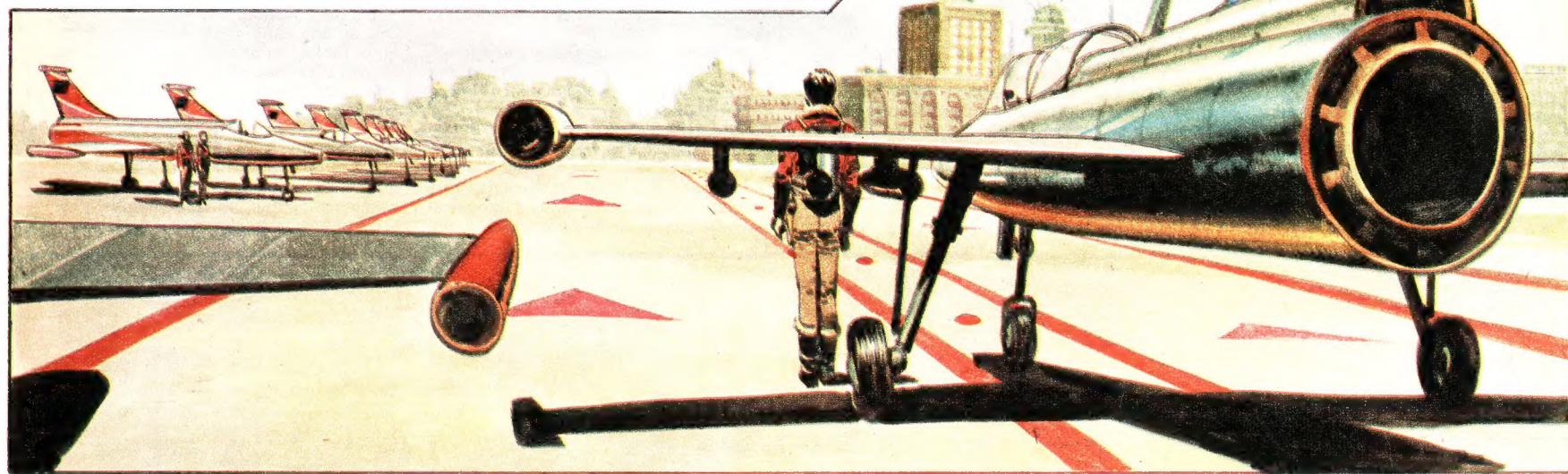
Janno was appalled!



But—like the majority of his people—Nikko's mind was poisoned by the substance from Outer Space . . .



At dawn next day, the Hericon air fleet was drawn up in battle order.



Particles of alien plant life have descended on Hericon and poisoned the Hericon national beverage, Gorbal. The poisoned Gorbal turns men's minds into cold, calculating instruments, entirely without mercy. This has happened to King Nikko. He has ordered his Air Fleet to attack the friendly country of Zeth—and has placed Janno under arrest for disobeying....

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

Janno was marched away

I must stop this idiocy some how.

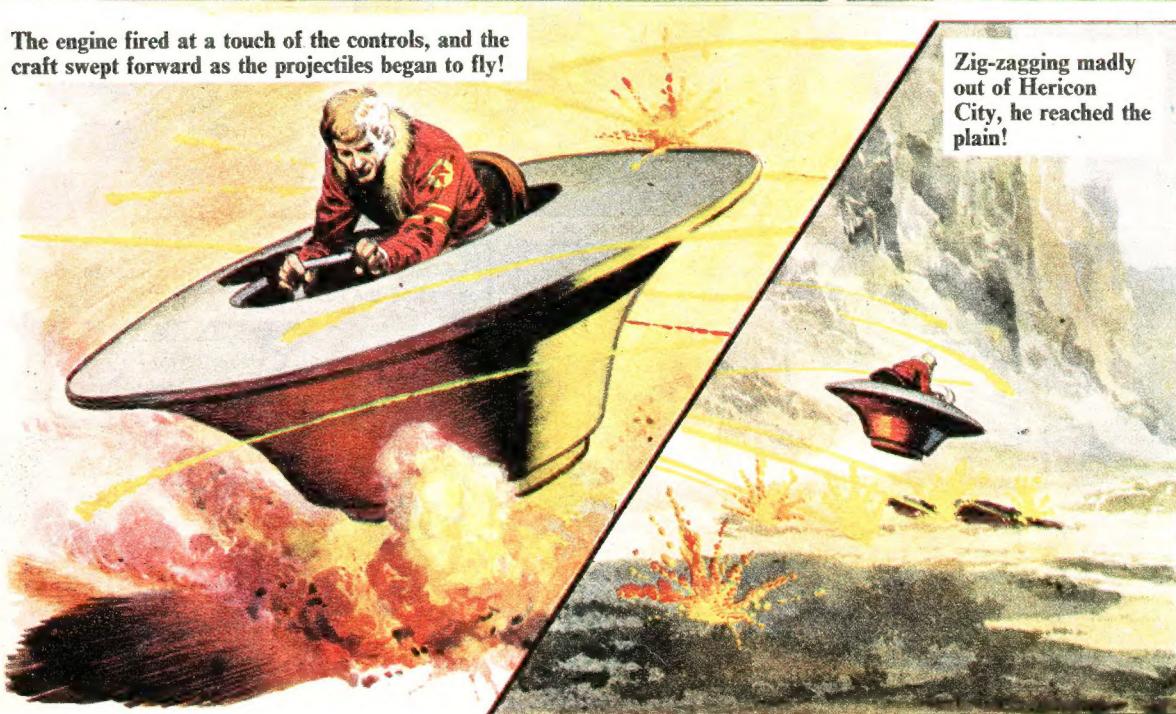
Then . . . he saw his chance . . .



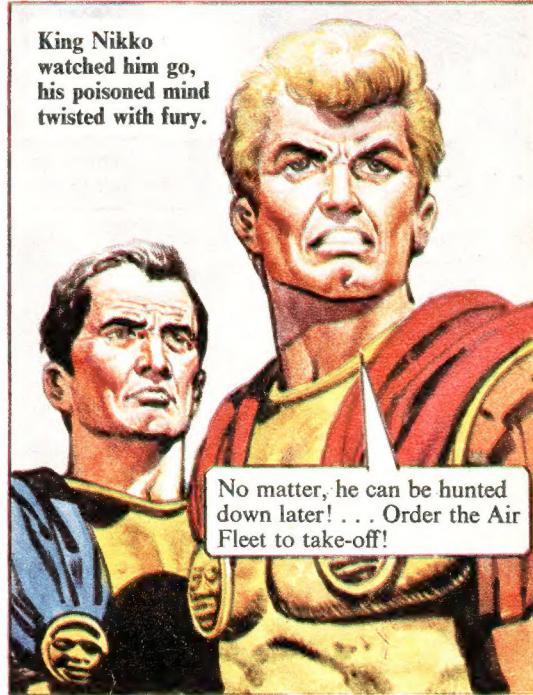
Ahead of him was a one-man Giro-craft. He raced for it.



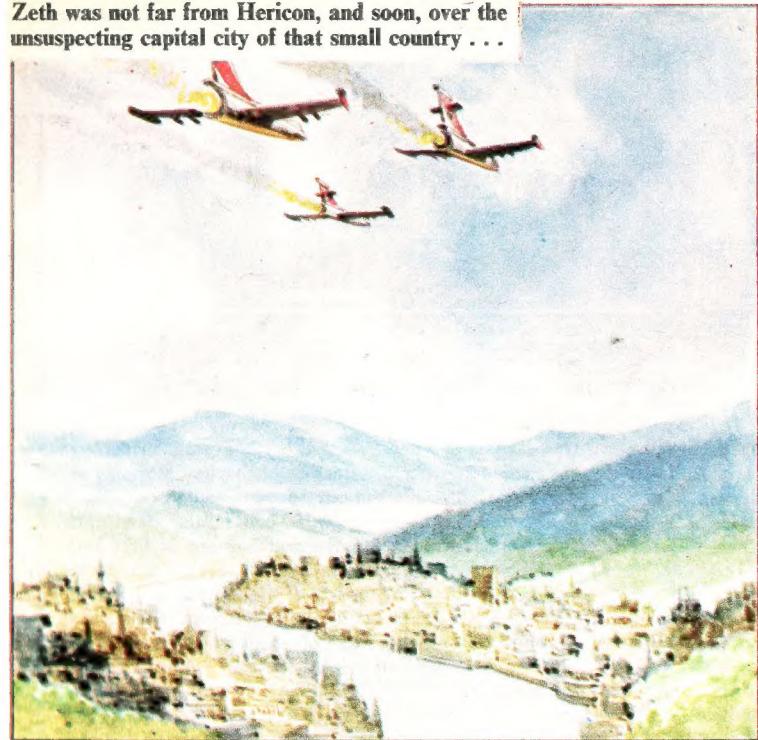
The engine fired at a touch of the controls, and the craft swept forward as the projectiles began to fly!



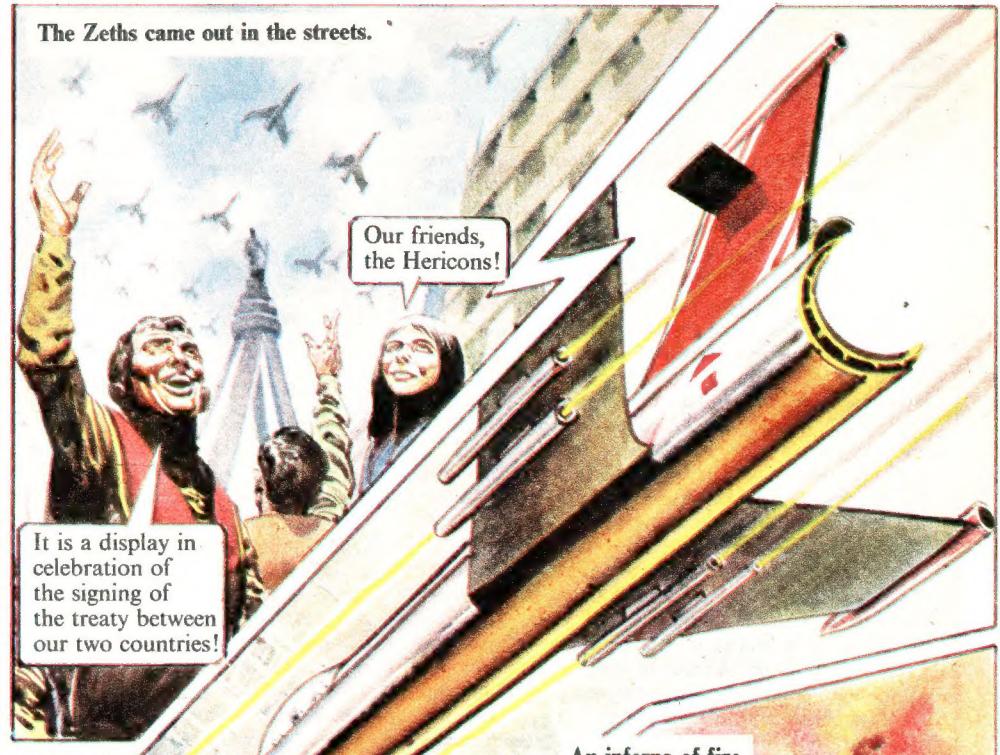
Zig-zagging madly out of Hericon City, he reached the plain!



Zeth was not far from Hericon, and soon, over the unsuspecting capital city of that small country . . .



The Zeths came out in the streets.



And then . . . suddenly, savagely and without warning!

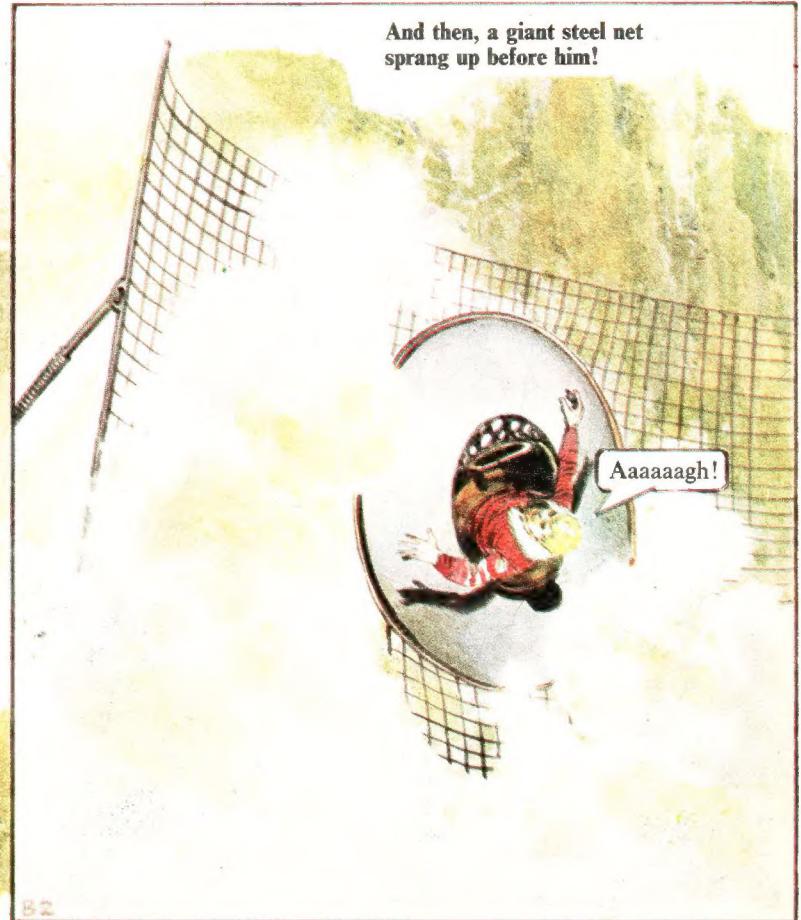


By midday, the Hericons were masters of the city . . . there was no resistance from the peaceful Zeths.



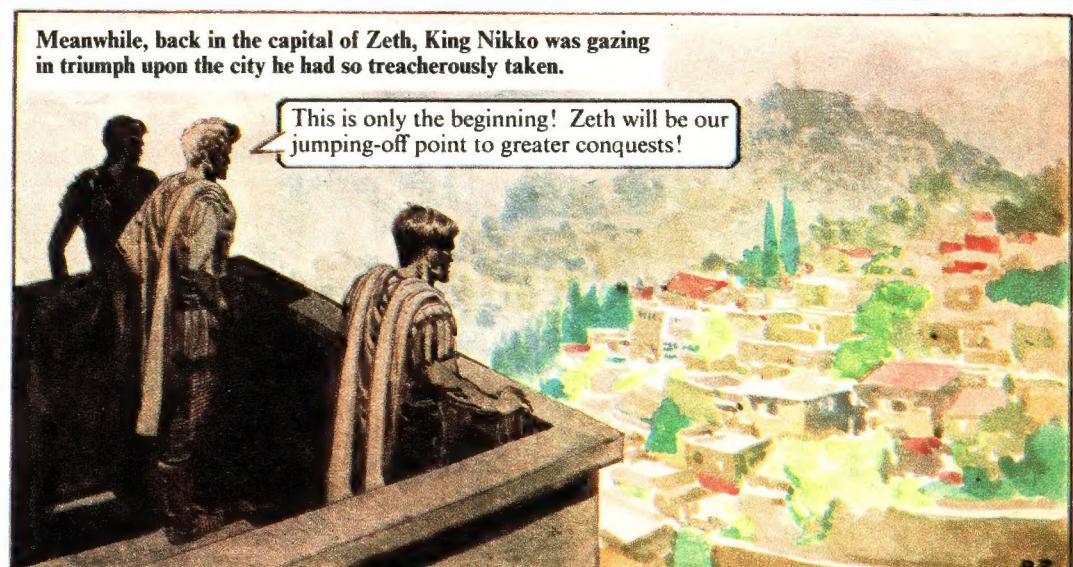
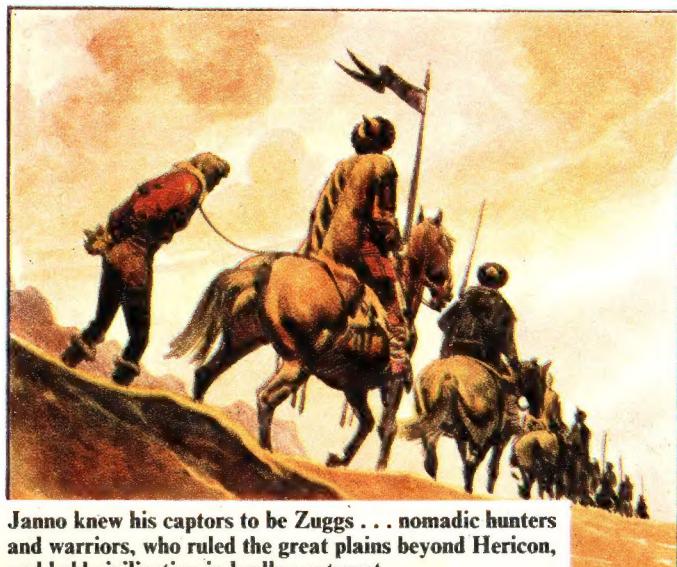
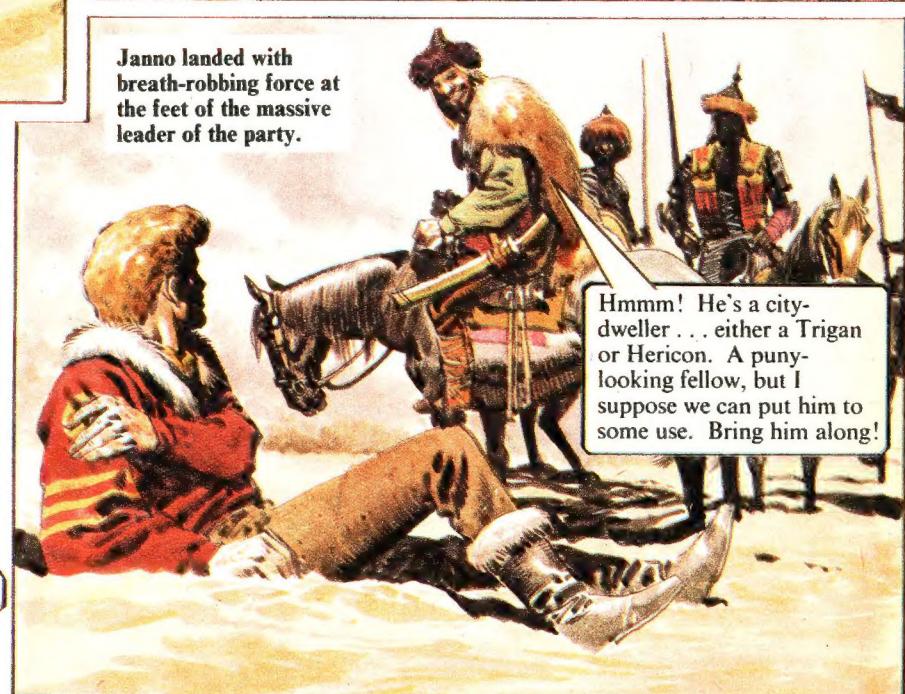
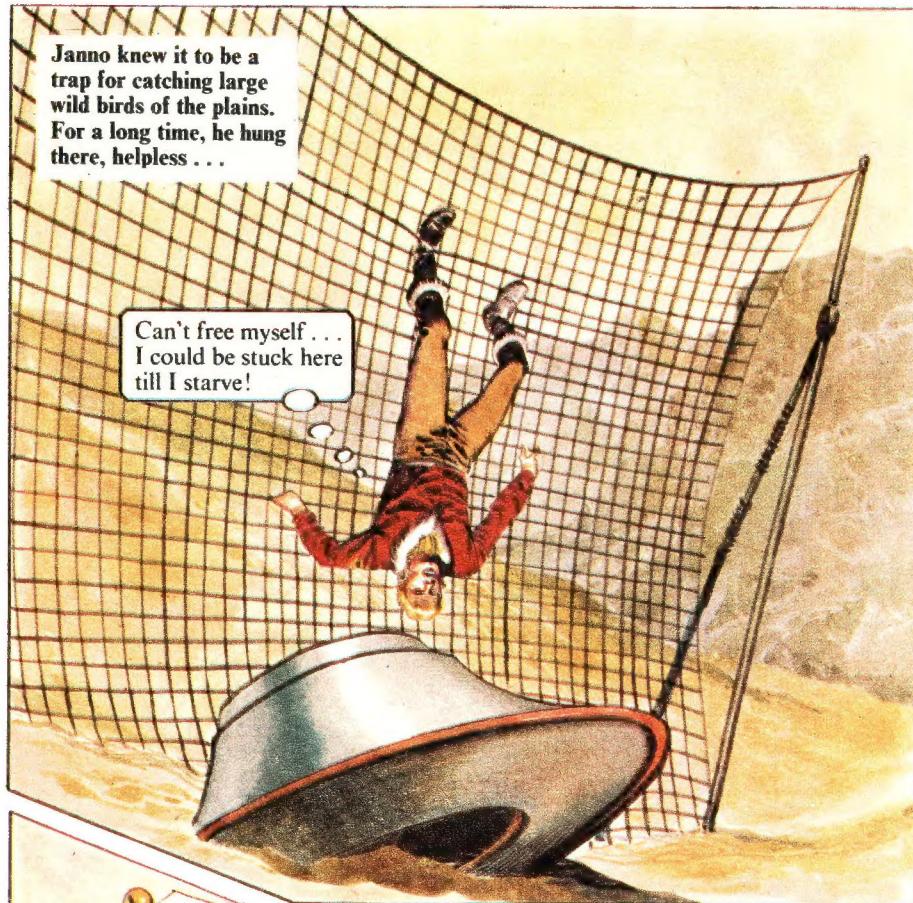
Meanwhile, far away across the plain, Janno was intent on putting as much distance between himself and Hericon as possible.

And then, a giant steel net sprang up before him!

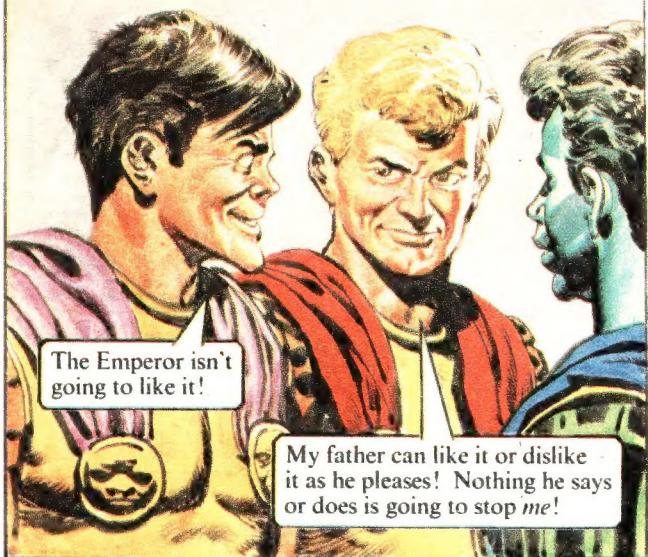


THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

Particles of alien plant life have descended on Hericon and affected the plant used to brew the Hericon national beverage, Gorbal. The effect of drinking the poisoned Gorbal is to turn men's minds into cold, calculating instruments, entirely without mercy. King Nikko of Hericon has treacherously invaded peace-loving Zeth, and Janno has got caught up in a fiendish trap . . .

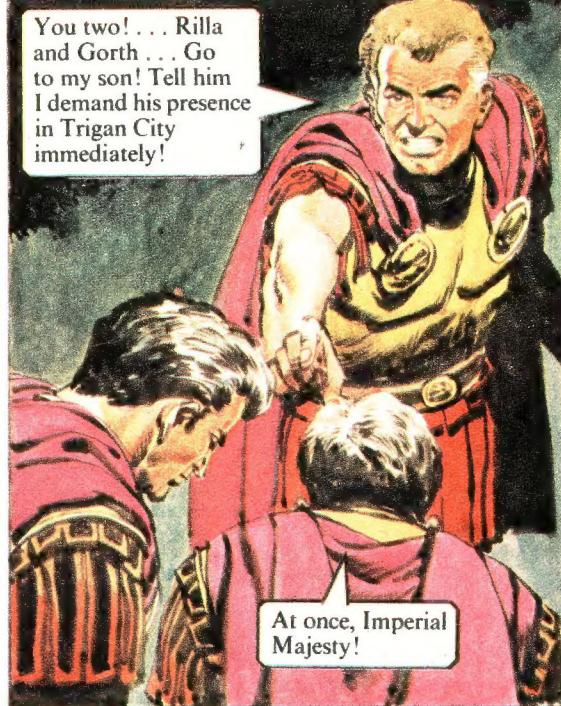
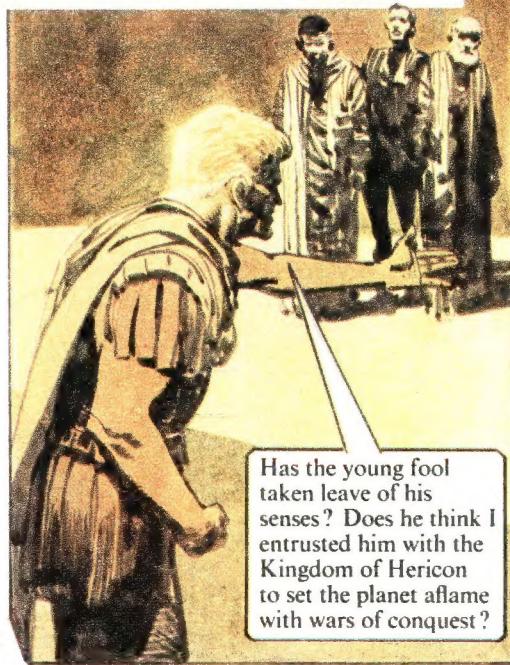


Like the King, the minds of Keren and Roffa had been poisoned by the sinister plant life from Outer Space.



The Emperor's demand was brought to Nikko. The young King listened with a smile. He took a deep drink of the beverage that was poisoning his mind . . . and gave his reply.

News of the invasion had reached Trigan City, and Emperor Trigo was in a towering fury.



That afternoon, a Hericon craft circled high over Trigan City.



THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

The minds of King Nikko of Hericon and his subjects have been poisoned by particles of alien plant life which have entered the Hericon national beverage Gorbal. To the fury of his father the Emperor Trigo, Nikko has launched a treacherous campaign of conquest. Janno—whose mind is not affected by the alien poison—is a prisoner of the fierce, nomadic Zuggs.

The Zugg hunting party were heading for their main camp in the heart of the Great Plains. Towards midday, their leader Jegiz called a halt . . .

We'll make camp here!

Janno's hands were unbound, and he was contemptuously set to work.

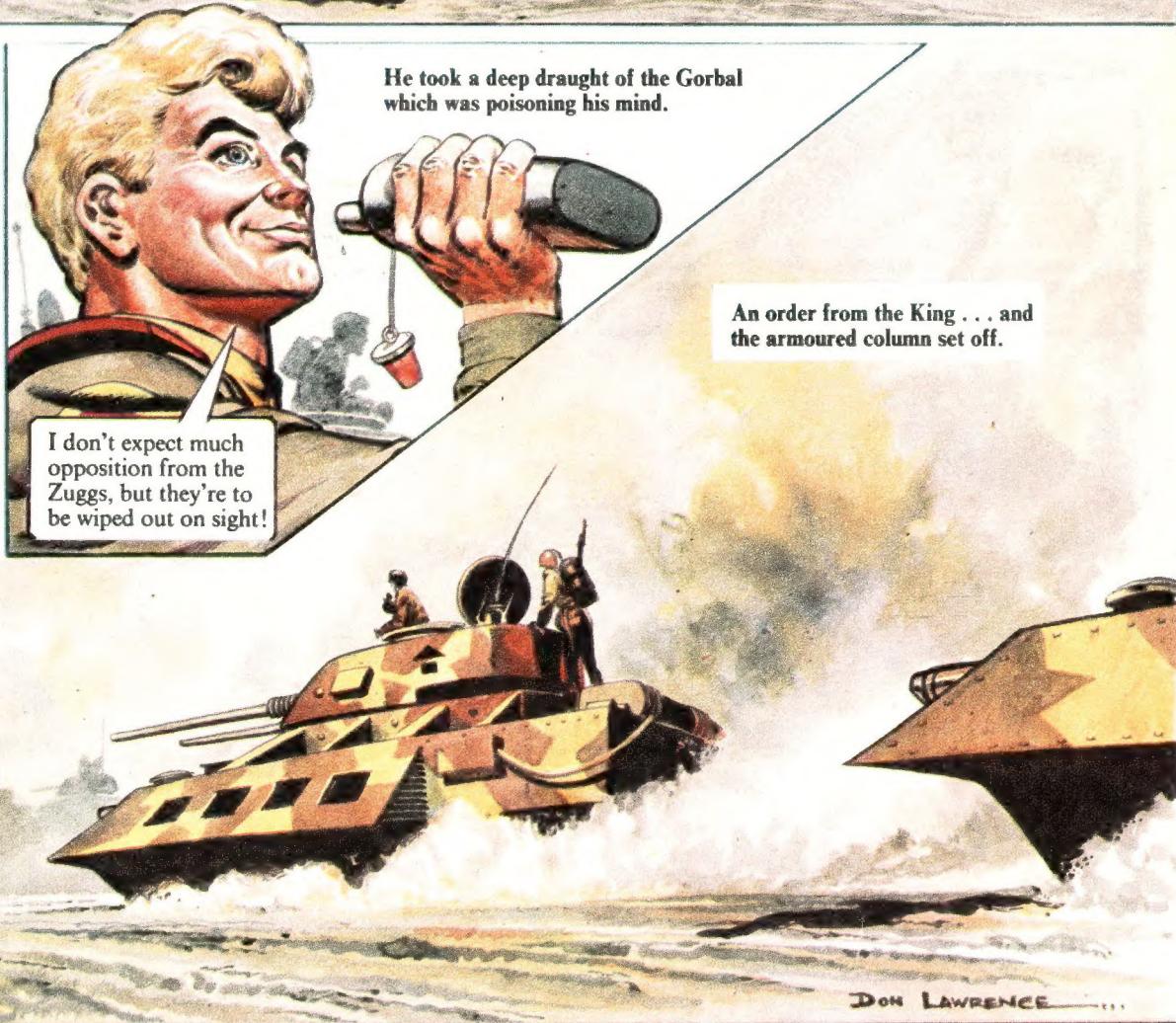
Meanwhile, outside Hericon City, the deafening roar of armoured fighting craft filled the air.



King Nikko swung into the turret of the leading craft.



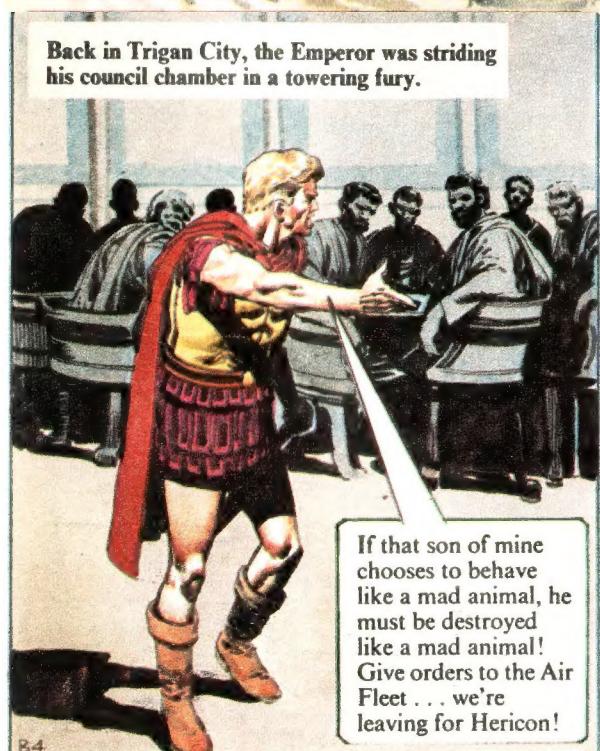
Right! We move out and occupy the Great Plain . . . The operation should be completed by sunset!



He took a deep draught of the Gorbal which was poisoning his mind.

An order from the King . . . and the armoured column set off.

I don't expect much opposition from the Zuggs, but they're to be wiped out on sight!



Back in Trigan City, the Emperor was striding his council chamber in a towering fury.

If that son of mine chooses to behave like a mad animal, he must be destroyed like a mad animal! Give orders to the Air Fleet . . . we're leaving for Hericon!



And then . . .

Imperial Majesty! News from Hericon! King Nikko is leading an armoured column to occupy the Great Plain!

Is he now? . . . Then, gentlemen, you can forget my last order . . .



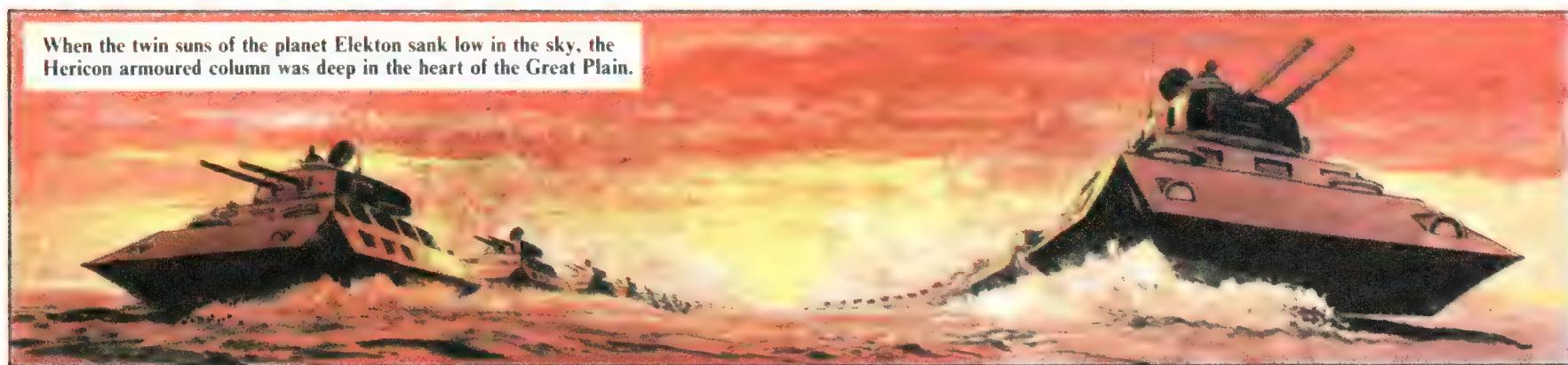
There was a grim smile on Trigo's lips . . .

I have fought the mighty Zugg tribesmen on the Great Plain, and I know this . . . the Zuggs will punish Nikko for his folly!

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

When the twin suns of the planet Elekton sank low in the sky, the Hericon armoured column was deep in the heart of the Great Plain.

The minds of King Nikko of Hericon and his subjects have been poisoned by particles of alien plant life which have entered the Hericon national beverage, Gorbal, with the result that Nikko has launched a treacherous campaign of conquest.



Zugg tribesmen sighted the force from a craggy mountain crest.

City dwellers defiling our hunting grounds!
So much the worse for them!

They brought the news to their leader.

Armoured craft are coming this way. Jegiz!
That will be Nikko!
Then the King of Hericon is riding to destruction!

Janno was now an honoured guest of the warrior-hunters. He listened in awe as the Zugg leader calmly addressed his men.

Mount up! We've much to do before dawn. You all know your tasks. By this time tomorrow there won't be a single Hericon alive on the plains!

At nightfall, Nikko gave orders for the column to halt.

No sign of the Zuggs, but we'll hunt them down and wipe them out in the morning.

The King and his officers ate, and drank deeply of the poisoned Gorbal.

What's the fuel situation, Keren?

The craft are half-empty, Sire. But two fuel tankers are due here before dawn.

Far across the plain, two large fuel-carriers sped along.



Gunners! Keep a lookout for Zugg patrols, and shoot on sight!

And then . . .

Aaaaaaaah! . . . Stop!
. . . Stop! . . .

A wall of stakes sprang up ahead of the craft!

Then followed chaos and disaster!

As silence fell over the wreckage, a party of Zugg tribesmen rode out of the shadows.

King Nikko of Hericon saw it from afar . . . a great billowing of lurid flame . . . followed by a thunderclap of sound.

An officer replied . . . with the cold finger of fear trailing down his spine.

Janno was with the Zugg leader. He, too, saw the explosion . . . and he shuddered at Jegiz' merciless words . . .

By all the stars!
What's that?

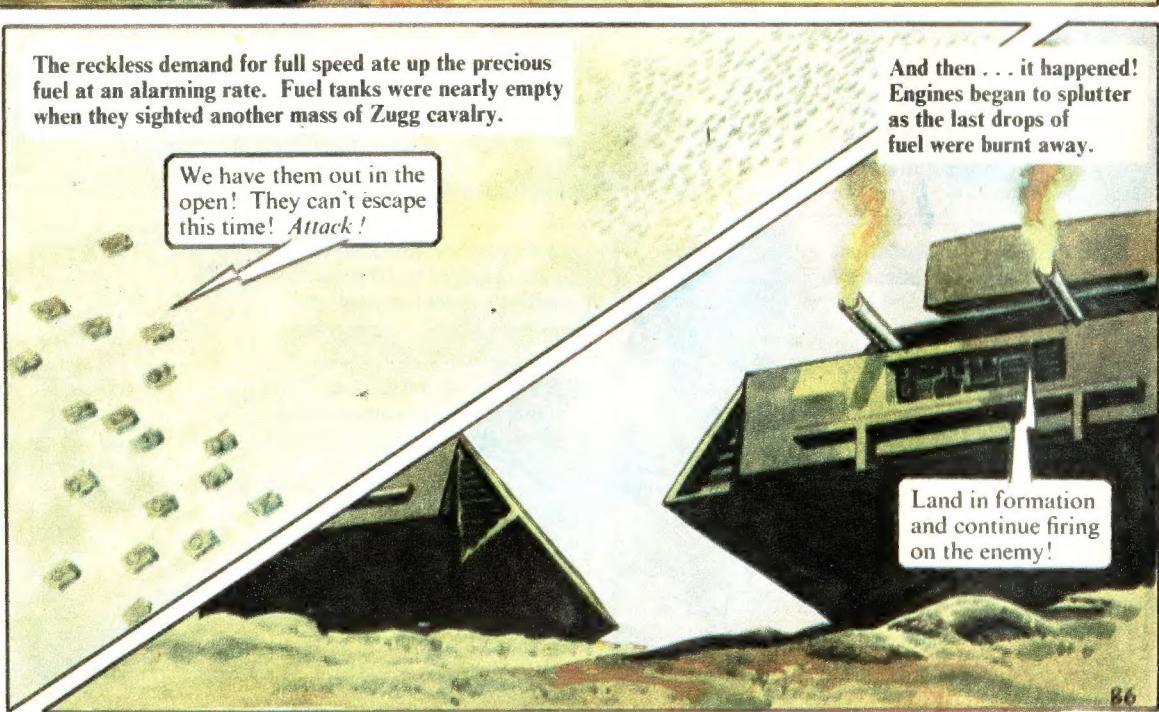
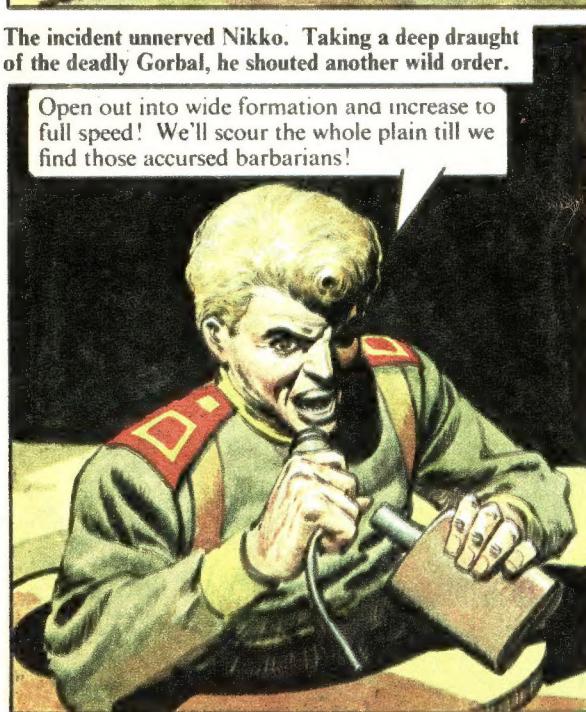
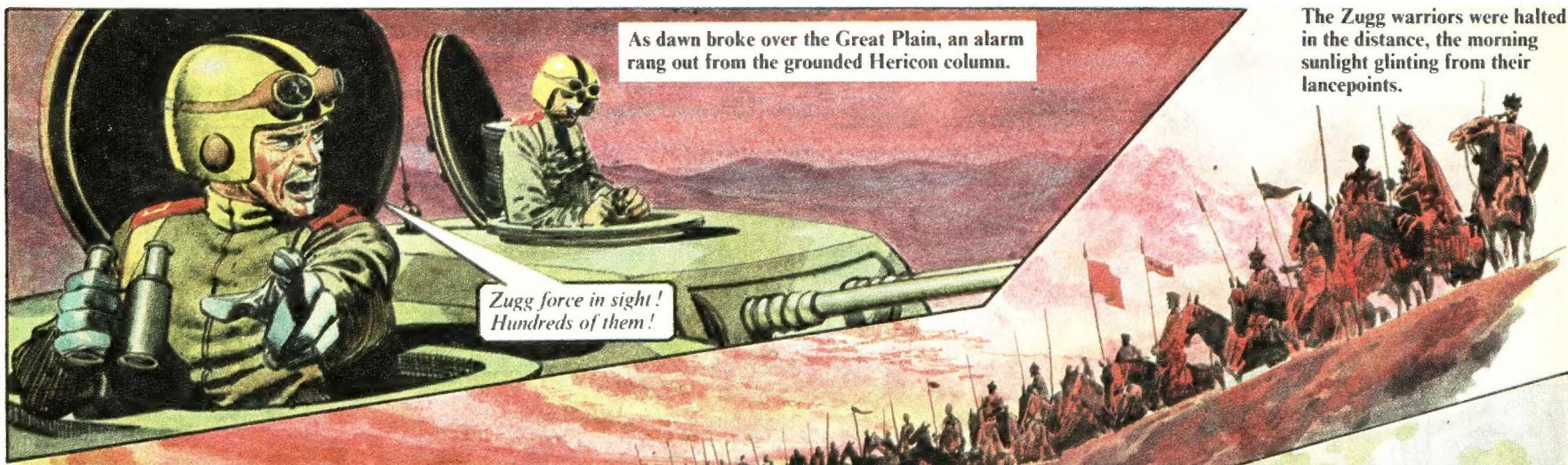
I believe, Sire,
that was our fuel
blowing up!

Tomorrow we'll lead them a dance till the remainder of their fuel has gone . . . then we'll close in for the kill!

The minds of King Nikko of Hericon and his subjects have been poisoned by particles of alien plant life which have entered the Hericon national beverage called Gorbal, with the result that Nikko has launched a treacherous campaign of conquest.

But the armoured column, which the King has led into the Great Plain, is in trouble

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE



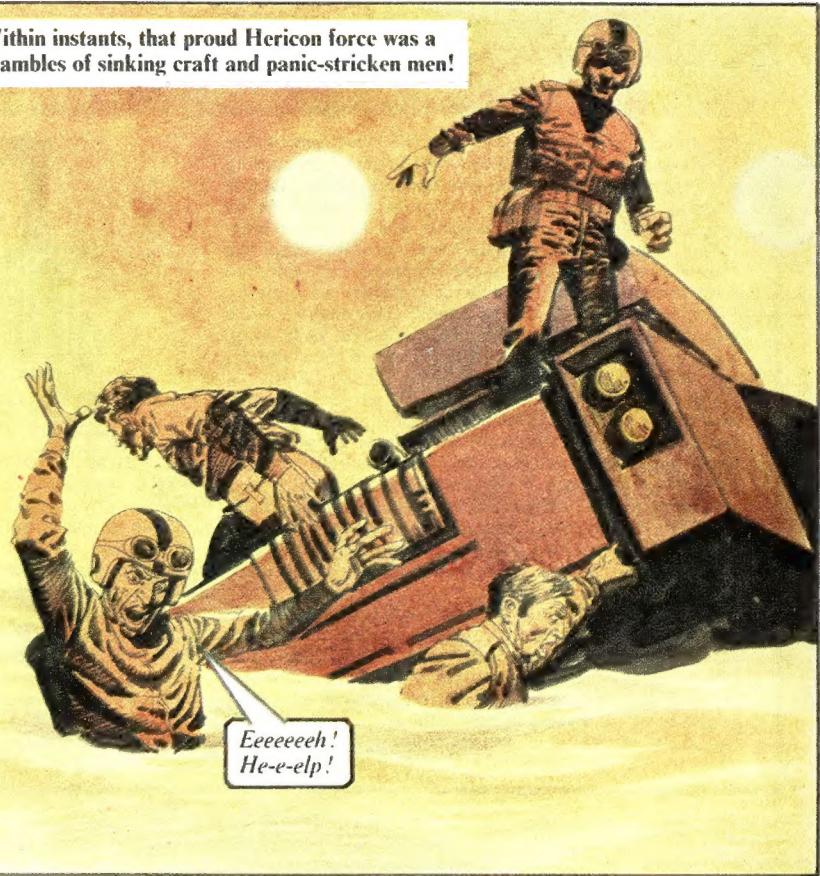
The Zugg warriors were halted in the distance, the morning sunlight glinting from their lancepoints.

No sooner did the heavy, armoured hovercraft touch the ground than they sank!

Aaaaaah! . . . We're in a quicksand!



Within instants, that proud Hericon force was a shambles of sinking craft and panic-stricken men!



Nikko saw Keren floundering to his doom and grabbed his arm. . . .



Plunging through the yielding sand, the young king felt his feet touch firm ground . . . he staggered to safety, dragging his burden behind him.

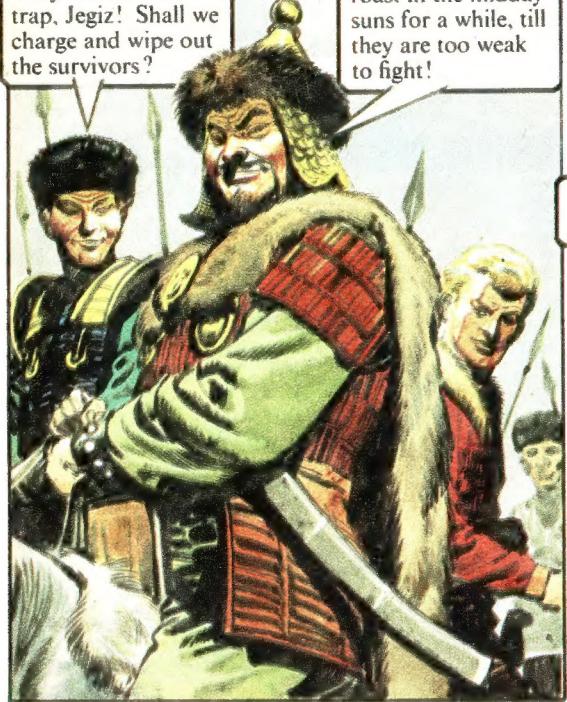
Thank the stars! . . . We're out of it, Keren!



Jegiz watched the destruction of the column from a distance. The Zugg leader's fierce face creased in a grin of triumph.

They fell into our trap, Jegiz! Shall we charge and wipe out the survivors?

Not yet! Let them roast in the midday suns for a while, till they are too weak to fight!



How long can we hold out, sire?

No time at all. . . .



The deadly Gorbal had all been drunk!

Let's hope the barbarians attack and finish it . . . before we all go mad with thirst!

NEXT WEEK: JANNO RISKS HIS LIFE FOR HIS COMRADES

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

The minds of King Nikko and his subjects have been poisoned by particles of alien plant life which have entered the Hericon national beverage Gorbal, with the result that Nikko has launched a treacherous campaign of conquest.

Now Nikko, defeated by the wild Zuggs, waits with the survivors of his force . . . for the end . . .

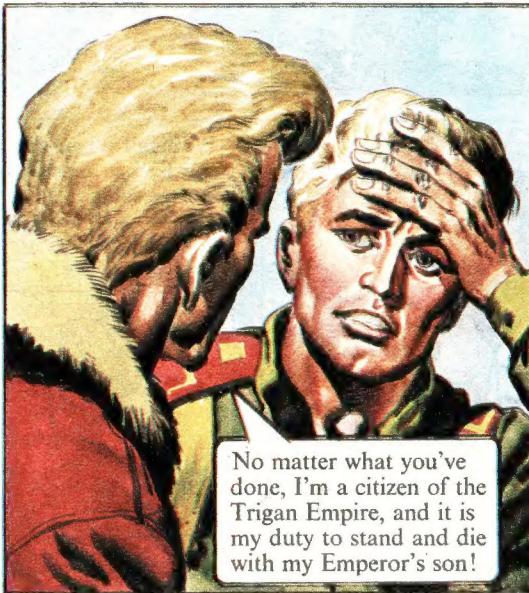
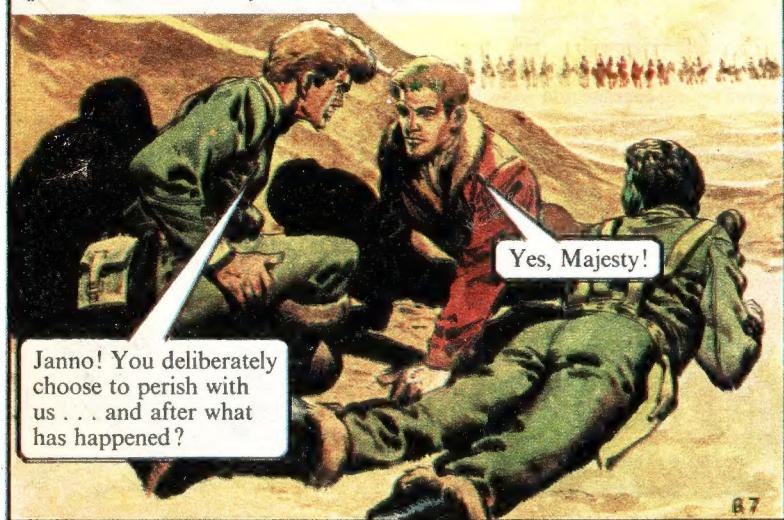
When the searing suns of the planet Elekton reached their zenith, the mind of one of the Hericons snapped . . .



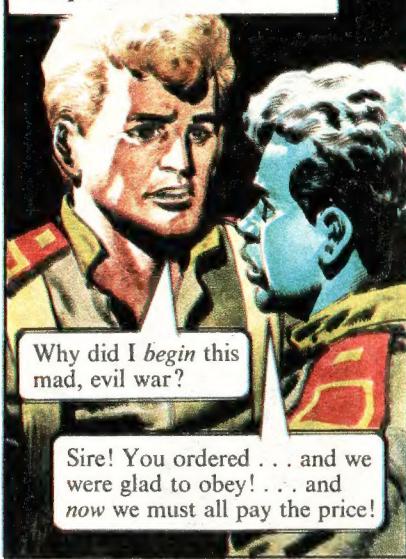
It was then that Janno urged his Kreed forward at the gallop . . . away from the Zuggs . . . and towards the doomed Hericons.

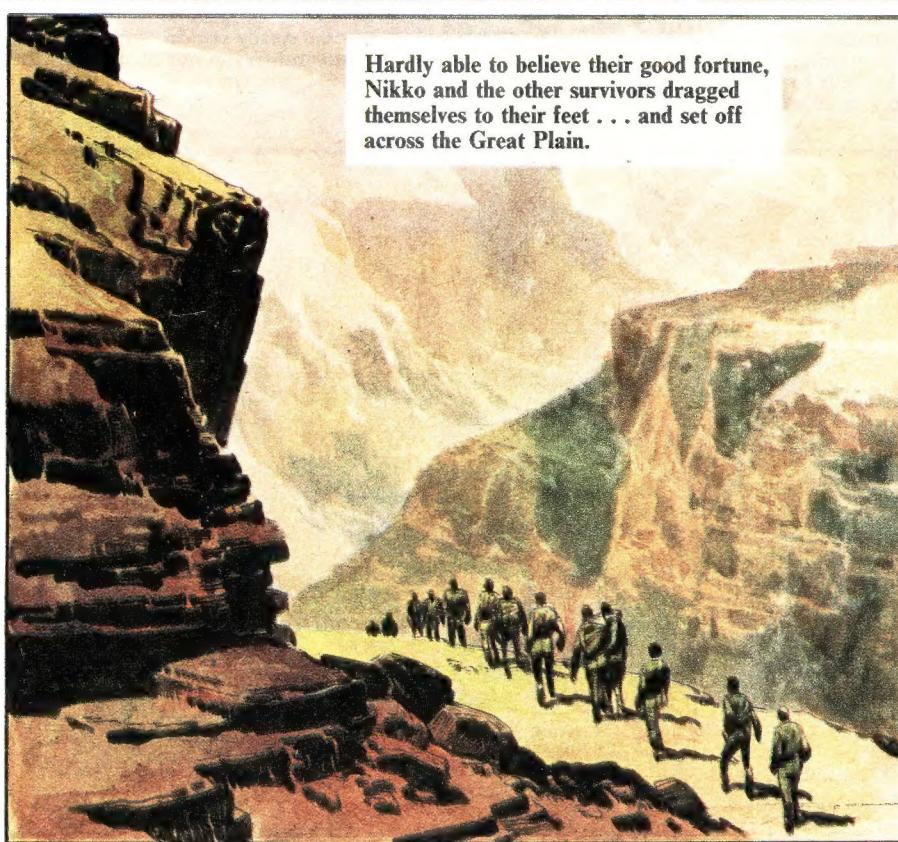
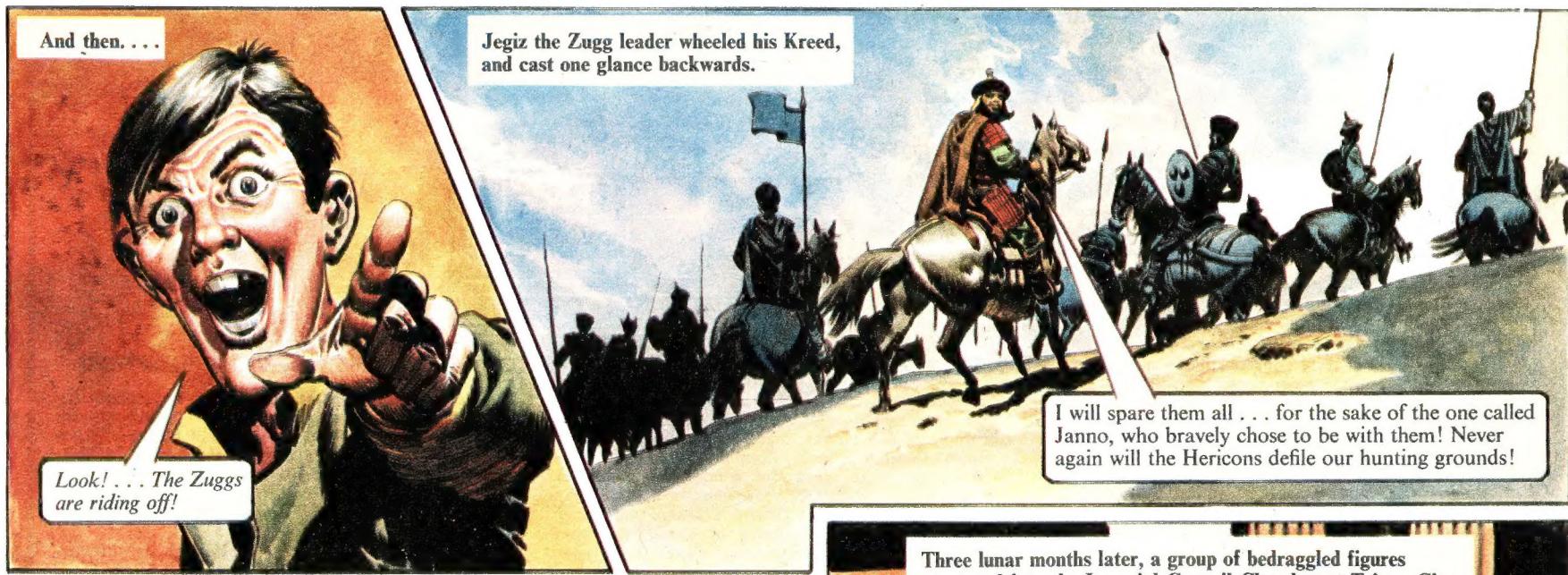


Reaching the shallow hollow, Janno leapt to the ground and crouched by the astonished Hericons.



The poisonous fumes of Gorbal were clearing from the minds of Nikko and his companions . . .



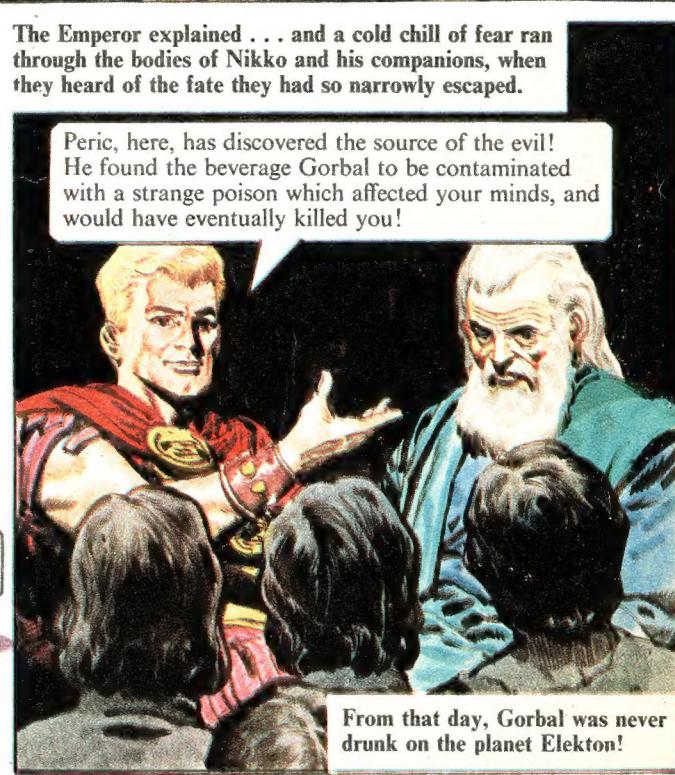


Hardly able to believe their good fortune, Nikko and the other survivors dragged themselves to their feet . . . and set off across the Great Plain.

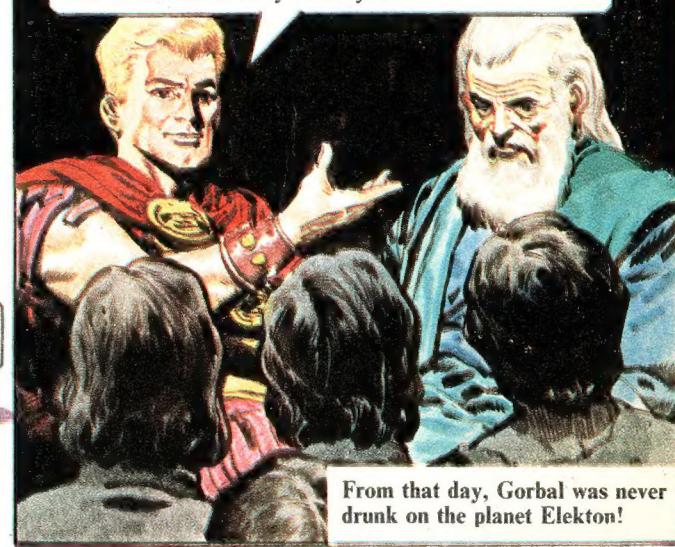


Trigo raised his son to his feet.

There is nothing to forgive, Nikko! You are not to blame for what you did!



Peric, here, has discovered the source of the evil! He found the beverage Gorbal to be contaminated with a strange poison which affected your minds, and would have eventually killed you!



WATCH FOR A THRILLING NEW CHAPTER IN THE HISTORY OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE NEXT WEEK